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Proceedings of a Meeting of Citizens of
Nashua - 1842

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Nashua, N. H.

PROCEEDINGS

OF

A MEETING OF CITIZENS OF NASHUA

UPON THE NORTH SIDE OF NASHUA RIVER,

MARCH 10, 1842;

UPON THE SUBJECT OF CERTAIN GRIEVANCES;

WITH A

REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS THEREON,

BY A COMMITTEE CHOSEN FOR THE PURPOSE.

NASHUA:

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1842.

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1858, Mar. 27,

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PROCEEDINGS.

IN consequence of the illiberal and proscriptive course pursued by a majority of the citizens of Nashua, living south of the river, during the recent town meeting, at the instigation of a few individuals, towards their fellow citizens living on the north side of the river and at Indian Head, especially in the proceedings in regard to the erection of a Town House, the latter with such of their friends as participated in their feelings of just indignation, held a meeting at Greeley's Hall, on the evening of Thursday, March 10, 1842, the last day of said town meeting, to take the subject into consideration, and organized by the choice of Hon. DANIEL ABBOT, Chairman, and SOLOMON SPALDING, Secretary.

After addresses by several gentlemen, setting forth the grievances of which they complained, and their regret and surprise as citizens and tax payers of the town, that they should be excluded from all share in the management of town affairs in which they were deeply interested, a committee of *five* was appointed, consisting of Hon. Charles F. Gove, Charles J. Fox, James A. Dupee, David Robinson, and Ignatius Bagley, to prepare a statement of facts, and suitable resolutions expressive of the sentiments and feelings of the meeting, and to report at the adjourned meeting on Saturday evening next.

On Saturday evening, March 12, a meeting was holden

agreeably to adjournment, which was very numerously attended. The committee appointed on Thursday last to prepare resolutions, &c. made a report, which was read, and after addresses from several individuals, was UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED. One thousand copies of the report and resolutions were ordered to be printed for the use of the citizens.

DANIEL ABBOT, Chairman.

SOLOMON SPALDING, Secretary.

R E P O R T .

THE Committee appointed at the meeting of a portion of the citizens of Nashua, holden at Greeley's Hall, on Thursday evening, March 10, 1842, to prepare a statement of the facts which transpired at the recent town meeting, in relation to a town house, and resolutions expressive of their feelings at the injustice and indignity with which they have been treated by a portion of their fellow citizens, beg leave to present the following report :

In the Warrant for the late town meeting, an article was inserted, "to see if the town will do anything in relation to the building of a town house." It was a subject of much importance, and one in which every citizen of the town had an equal interest. It was one which we were disposed to meet in a fair and liberal spirit, and to settle in such a manner as that there should be no ground for future heart burnings and complaints. It was one which ought to have been settled equitably, after a full knowledge of all the facts in the case, and by impartial and disinterested men. It was one which we were not prepared to decide, without information as to what suitable lots could be had, and at what prices ; or whether any suitable lot could be had for that purpose. We hoped that our fellow citizens on

the south side of the river were disposed to do us justice, and that the principle of the tyrant and the robber—that **MIGHT MAKES RIGHT**—would find no advocates among the citizens of Nashua.

For the purpose of enabling the town to procure the information necessary to a proper location of the town house, a motion was made by Mr. Gove on Tuesday evening, while a motion was pending for an adjournment to the next morning, for an adjournment of two or three days and the appointment of a committee to ascertain what suitable lots could be obtained, and the location, size, and prices of the same; to receive proposals in writing for all such lots; to make all such preliminary inquiries and arrangements as might be necessary or useful in enabling the citizens of the town to decide upon the best location, and to report at such adjourned meeting. To this equitable course it was objected in substance that all such information was unnecessary—that every man (on the south side of the river) had made up his mind, and that they were prepared to act without the information, and would run the risk. This reasonable request, which any prudent man or body of men would have adopted in their own affairs, was voted down and rejected by the votes of those living on the south side of the Nashua.

On Wednesday afternoon, when the article concerning the erection of a town house came up in its order, a motion was made by Isaac Spalding, to postpone it until all other articles were disposed of, and that this article should then be decided. To this it was objected that the citizens generally needed some information as to the location, size and prices of suitable lots, and that it would then be too late to procure this information. It was moved therefore, by Mr. Gove, that the town proceed in the decision of the question, so far as to determine whether a town house should be erected, and that mea-

asures should then be taken to procure and lay before the town all the information which could be obtained upon the subject. Mr. Spalding withdrew his motion and the town thereupon voted to build a town house, and an appropriation was made therefor.

Immediately upon these votes, a resolution was introduced by George Y. Sawyer, that the town house be erected in Nashua Village, and on the south side of the Nashua river. To this it was objected that the citizens generally could not be prepared at that time to vote understandingly upon the subject—that no lots had been proposed, and it was not known that any suitable lot could be obtained, or if so, where it was and what was its price—and that a fair and free competition ought to be left open, so that the town should have the benefit of it, and that no individual might obtain an exorbitant price for his land. For this purpose an amendment to Mr. Sawyer's resolution, was offered by Mr. Gove to this effect : " Provided that a lot can be obtained on the south side on reasonable terms, and equally convenient for the town as on the north side of the river." The reasons assigned for this amendment, in addition to those already mentioned, were, that there were probably lots on both sides of the river which would accommodate the town—that no line of separation should be drawn, and no part of the village excluded from the competition—that shutting out a large part of the village from the competition would naturally increase the price asked for the lots which would come in competition, and that the town would be thus compelled to pay more than was necessary—that many were not prepared to vote without knowing what lots could be had, and the prices asked—that they did not wish to vote or to compel others to vote in the dark, or to pay an exorbitant sum for a lot—that it was against the interest of the tax-payers of the town, and that it was oppressive and proscriptive

towards the inhabitants on the north side of the river.

To this it was objected in substance by George Y. Sawyer and others, that it would produce delay, as further action would then be necessary in order to ascertain the location, size, and prices of lots, and that this was unnecessary, because every man was prepared to vote without the information—that the only question to be settled was, upon which side of the river shall the location be made. To this objection it was replied, that the amendment would produce no more delay than the original resolution, as by neither was any lot designated, and that this must be done and further action had under either—that its only effect would be to shut out and proscribe a large portion of the village without a hearing, and increase the cost of the house—that the amendment itself located the town house on the south side of the river, provided they would furnish a lot on favorable terms, and as convenient for the town as on the north side, and that if they could not do so it ought not to be located there—and if they had justice on their side, a little delay and more information could do them no harm. Many other remarks were made by individuals in objection to the amendment in substance—that the inhabitants on the south side of the river wished for no information on the subject—that whether the house cost a few thousand dollars more or less, was of no consequence—that every man who lived on that side of the river would of course vote to locate the house there, and that they would do so even if the best lot on the north side with a good town house on it, were offered for nothing—that a majority of the voters lived on the south side of the river, and the people of the north side had no business to say any thing about the location—that every man would vote according to his (pecuniary) interest—that they were willing to run the risk

of voting in the dark—that the house should not be located on the north side of the river for any consideration.

On Thursday morning Mr. Sawyer withdrew his resolution, and offered a substitute to this effect—‘that the sense of the voters be taken, whether the town house be erected on the south side or on the north side of the river.’ To this it was objected that it was substantially the same as the original resolution—that men ought not thus to act, or be compelled to act, without information and in the dark—that it was contrary to the interests of the town and the rights of a large portion of the citizens, and that all the objections to the original resolution, applied equally to the substitute. A motion was then made by Mr. Gove, that this resolution be laid upon the table for the present, and a committee appointed to ascertain what lots could be had, to receive proposals therefor, and to report at *three o'clock* on the same day. The reasons given were similar to those before mentioned ;—that the information proposed to be obtained was proper and necessary for a fair and satisfactory settlement of the question—that it could do no harm—and that the proposals for lots being in writing would be a benefit to the town. To this it was objected as before, that every man on the south side of the river had already made up his mind—that they wanted no more light—that to make proposals for lots, was “*bribery*,” and that expense was of no importance. The motion for a committee, which would have caused very little if any delay, was THEN REJECTED.

Mr. Andrew E. Thayer stated that he would give for a town house, a lot situated on Main street, about seventeen rods only from the bridge, eighty-three feet in front on Main street, and one hundred feet deep on another street. Another lot, about ten rods only from the bridge, opposite the Baptist Meeting House,

fronting one hundred feet on Main Street and ninety feet on Franklin Street, was offered at a price from *five to seven hundred dollars*. Three lots were mentioned on the south side, one for \$3,000 with buildings, another for thirty or thirty five hundred dollars without buildings, and another for \$4,700, with buildings. The prices of the last lots were not mentioned until a direct inquiry was made by citizens residing on the south side of the river, but yet not in favor of gagging free discussion, voting without information, or shutting out the light.

It was then voted, that the town house be erected on the south side of the river, and between Pearl Street and the bridge. A resolution was then offered by George Y. Sawyer, that a committee of *five* be nominated by the Moderator to decide upon the location of the town house, and purchase a suitable lot therefor, and it was passed. The Moderator nominated the committee, composed of three persons residing on the south side, and two residing on the north side of the river. The nomination was immediately *objected to* by Mr. Sawyer, the mover of the resolution, and the authority just given to the Moderator to *nominate* was *reconsidered*. Various individuals were then nominated; but *every person residing on the north side of the river, or even on the south side if in favor of protecting the rights of the minority and the interests of the town, was voted down and rejected*.

After this committee of *five* was thus chosen, every individual of whom resides on the south side of the river, a motion was made to add a sixth person to the committee residing on the north side. This motion too was rejected, thus denying to every citizen residing north of the river even the smallest share in the location of a town house for which they and their friends are to be taxed, and compelled to pay nearly one half of the cost of its erection. Of

the doings of this committee of location, a majority of whom have private and pecuniary interests which will be promoted by a particular location, we are forbidden to have any participation or knowledge. We are to be taxed, but they deny that we shall be represented.

Such a course of oppression and injustice, of insult and selfishness, is without a precedent. Throughout the whole proceeding, a few individuals were conspicuous from the rejection of the first motion of Mr. Gove on Tuesday evening, to the refusal to permit a single individual on the north side of the river to have a voice in the committee of location on Thursday evening. The individual who presented the first resolution, that the house be located south of the bridge, admitted that other measures were prepared and to follow—that they had information enough and were ready to act—and as the wires were pulled, measures were adopted or rejected. We are constrained, therefore, to believe that those resolutions and proceedings were preconcerted, and that a conspiracy existed among certain persons on the south side of the river to deprive the people on the north side of their rights, and to benefit themselves at the expense of the town. We are not disposed to doubt either that they possessed “*information*” upon the subject of lots, which the majority of the town did not possess, and “*information*” too which if the town had possessed might have produced a material change in the result. If any bargain or arrangement was made before or during the meeting to effect a particular location, the town should know it, for we do not think that the interest of the town requires us to pay several thousand dollars more for a town house than is necessary, in order to put money in the pockets of a few individuals.

It is but justice to say that all persons residing on

the south side of the river are not implicated in these oppressive proceedings, and that many of them share our feelings of indignation at the unjust treatment which we have received at the hands of a portion of our fellow citizens. They dislike, as we do, the attempts so perseveringly made to check all discussion of the question, and to shut out all information. They dislike the principle that the saving of a few thousand dollars in the expense of a town house is of no consequence. They are willing that a fair hearing shall be given, and equal justice done to every citizen. As we are all citizens of *one* town, they do not wish to draw any lines of separation, but are willing to do unto others as they would have others do unto them in like circumstances. They will not bear wrong or oppression, and they do not wish to wrong or oppress their neighbors. For every instance of such honorable feeling and conduct we are grateful. When the excitement which has led many to do wrong at the instigation of a few, shall have passed away, and men shall view the proceedings of the last week dispassionately, we believe that many will regret, as some do already, the highhanded and arbitrary course which has been pursued by certain would be *dictators*, and that they had not manifested more forbearance, a greater regard for economy, and more respect for the rights of the minority.

In view of all these facts, and of others which might be stated, we cannot remain indifferent, inactive, or silent. We protest against being thus deprived of our rights as citizens of Nashua. We protest against being compelled to bear the burdens of the town while we cannot share its benefits. We protest against the attempt which was made in town meeting to gag us and our friends, and to *cough down* and prevent discussion. We protest against being proscribed without a hearing. We protest

against the arbitrary doctrine that a minority has no rights. We protest against our total and unjust exclusion from all participation in the location of our own town house. We protest against expending thousands of dollars unnecessarily—and then taxing us to pay it. We protest against the decision of such a question by interested men and without information. All we ask is a fair field and no favor. We do not “choose darkness rather than light,” because we ask only justice. We ask such a selection for a town house as shall be most for the interest of the town, and that this be recommended by impartial and disinterested men. Our reasonable request has been denied, and ourselves and our friends insulted. We regret this, because we desire to live in peace with our neighbors. We regret it, because among those who have unintentionally perhaps assisted to do us wrong, we number many of our best friends. To all such we bear no ill will; but if we cannot live together in peace, enjoying equal rights, let us then separate in peace. For those few who have labored so hard to excite hostility and jealousy, we wish no worse punishment than their own evil and malicious passions. Retribution will overtake them. We have asked nothing but what every candid man will say is reasonable and equitable, *a fair and full hearing*, and *no proscription*, and if this is to be denied, the rights and feelings of *five hundred* voters who pay nearly or quite one half of the taxes of the town, shall not be trampled upon with impunity.

Your committee therefore submit the following Resolutions,

CHARLES F. GOVE,
CHARLES J. FOX,
IGNATIUS BAGLEY,
JAMES A. DUPEE,
DAVID ROBINSON,

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolved, That we have witnessed with much pain and regret, the attempt made at our late town meeting to draw a line of division between different portions of our village, and to introduce hostility and bitterness of feeling into our peaceable community.

Resolved, That we regret deeply the attempts which were made so often to stop discussion upon the subject of a town house, and the refusal of a majority to obtain any information respecting the cost and location of suitable lots, so that the voters could decide understandingly, and for the best interests of the town.

Resolved, That the refusal of the inhabitants living on the south side of the river to permit a single citizen living on the north side of the river to act upon the Committee of Location, is an infringement of our rights, and alike destitute of courtesy and honesty.

Resolved, That the principle that "*might makes right*" is the maxim of the tyrant and the robber, but not of a freeman or a christian.

Resolved, That "*taxation without representation*" was the arbitrary tory doctrine of England which led to the independence of America, and that if we are to be *taxed while we are denied the privilege of being represented, or even heard*, such conduct is dictated by a similar arbitrary spirit, and deserves to meet with a similar fate.

Resolved, That if Nashua River is to be a line of

division for certain purposes, so that the citizens living on one side of it are to enjoy no rights, it ought to be a dividing line for other purposes, so that we may have the power to protect our own rights.

Resolved, That to those citizens who advocated the cause of truth, of right, and of justice, although not living among us, we tender our thanks, although we know that the best reward for their honesty is a good conscience.

Resolved, That we have lived so long united as one town that we should regret a separation, and will still hope that better counsels and a spirit of compromise may prevail, but we will never quietly submit to proscription or consent that our rights and feelings shall be trampled upon with impunity.



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